



# Questions & Answers about Job Discrimination

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## Q: What is job discrimination?

**A:** The law does not require employers to be nice. Employers can even fire someone if they don't like the person's personality or work style.

However, it is **illegal** for employers to treat you differently or unfairly because of your:

- race
- color
- national origin
- religion
- age
- sexual orientation
- sex (including pregnancy)
- physical disability
- mental disability
- & others not listed here

**People in the above groups are protected under anti-discrimination laws.**

## Q: What does being *treated differently* mean?

**A:** If you are in a group that is "protected", being treated differently means, you cannot be:

- fired; denied a job, pay increase or promotion;
  - verbally or physically harassed;
  - otherwise treated differently . . .
- . . .because of your race, color, etc.

For example, an employer cannot refuse to hire you simply because you are over age 50 or are pregnant. Also, an employer cannot try to "get even" with you or "retaliate" against you by treating you unfairly or firing you if you complain about illegal discrimination or file (or help someone file) a discrimination claim.

## Q: How do I know if what my employer does is **actually illegal**?

**A:** That depends on many things and is not easy to answer. Things to think about include:

Are you treated worse than employees who are not in your "protected" group? Were you disciplined in a harsher way than shown in the employee handbook? For example, you are Latina with no discipline problems at work and you were fired for a problem for which a white co-worker received only a warning.

Has your supervisor or any other boss said things that suggest he/she is biased against people in a certain group? For example, he made offensive comments about you or people of your race, color, religion, age, etc.

Has the boss made unwanted sexual jokes or remarks, or flirted or touched you without your consent?

Do you have evidence you were treated unfairly? For example, you had good evaluations but were fired for poor performance yet a co-worker's evaluations were not as good as yours and he was not fired.

## Q: What can I do if I think I'm being discriminated against at my job?

**A:** Protect yourself:

- Try to find someone there who could help you. Talk to your union representative or a supervisor you trust--even if is not your direct supervisor.
- Write down details of what happened: what the unfair treatment was, who did it, and when it happened. Ask for this statement to be put in your personnel file.
- Get copies of any discipline given to you. You have the right to have someone with you if you are called into a meeting where you think you will be disciplined or fired. Keep copies of letters or documents about the situation.

If you want to keep working for that employer, it is easier to solve the problem while you are still working there--speak with someone who can fix the problem. Don't say bad things about your boss to your co-workers. (See our flyer: *Tips on Keeping your Job*).

## Q: What if I am fired or unfairly disciplined?

**A:** If so, and you think it was discrimination, you have the right to file a complaint with the CHRO/CT Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (1-800-477-5737) and the US EEOC (1-800-669-4000). You can file a complaint yourself, but you may want to talk to a lawyer. You **must file** your CHRO complaint within **180 days** (300 days for EEOC) of the latest act of discrimination. It's a good idea to file as soon as you can.



**Questions?** Call Statewide Legal Services for free advice at 1-800-453-3320.